

STUDY OF PERSONALITY AND BEHAVIOR IN JAPANESE SOCIETY AND CULTURE

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Let us begin this paper with two questions: "Why do we study Japanese personality and behavior?" and "Where should we go from here?"

One good reason for studying Japan is that Japan is a unique laboratory of cultural and psychological alchemy in which Eastern and Western ingredients have been thrown together during the past hundred some years. In the crucible of Japanese society and culture, one should be able to find exciting specimens of culture contact, culture diffusion, acculturation, and innovation. Of particular interest to us is the problem of social and self identity, especially of youth.

As for the direction in which we should move, let us recall the suggestions made by Ronald Dore six years ago. At the end of a Bermuda Conference on Modernization of Japan, January 1963, Dore expressed his vision of the new stage into which Japanese studies should be moving in order to avoid the sterility that might otherwise set into the field. His opinion, shared by many of us, was that there are two major ways by which the field of Japanese studies can enrich itself and move forward with greater reward. One is the fuller utilization of the results of native Japanese scholars' efforts, and the incorporation of knowledge available in Japan and the United States, and anywhere else for that matter, into common storage. The second major way, as suggested by Dore, is to compare Japan with other relevant countries.

To attain the first goal, many American scholars will need better command of written Japanese to read freely what their Japanese colleagues produce. The Japanese scholars, in turn, need better command of spoken English to communicate with their American colleagues. They also need more knowledge concerning the framework, perspectives, and preoccupations with which their American colleagues work. Better communication and interaction between Japanese and American scholars on a much more advanced and sophisticated level will in many cases lead to a deepening of American knowledge, and a widening of the Japanese perspectives. What is important in such ventures is that both American and Japanese

scholars work *together* as true *co-workers*, rather than a Japanese scholar playing basically the role of a "sophisticated informant" for his American colleague, which unfortunately has often been the case.

Such a closer cooperation between American and Japanese scholars can, and perhaps should, be combined with the second effort, namely, the comparative study of Japan with other countries. The comparative approach invites people with extensive knowledge of Japan and those without it (the "area-oriented" and "problem-oriented" people, as Caudill classifies them). In my review article (Wagatsuma 1969), I pointed out that in studies made by Japanese scholars of socialization processes, person perception or group dynamics, and mass communication, the variable "Japan" is often totally lacking. I also noticed that some "comparative" studies done by collaborating Japanese and American psychologists, in which questionnaires and psychological tests were used, showed superficiality and rather naive insensitivity to the difficulties often involved in cross-cultural application of tests and questionnaires. Such "culture blind" (or sometimes even "ethnocentric") Japanese and Americans will be made aware of "things Japanese" and "things American" by working closely with colleagues from opposite countries who are more sophisticated in cross-cultural approach. In any case, both "area-oriented" and "problem-oriented" scholars should be invited as much as possible to work together. The area-oriented people may contribute to a deeper understanding of the problems, and the problem-oriented people may contribute wider perspectives and theoretical sophistication.

Let me be more specific and concrete, and enumerate some of the subjects that badly need to be studied.

1. *Differences between East and West*

The late Professor Ishida (1965) contrasted the world-view of Semitic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) with that of Oriental religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism). The world-view of the Semitic religions is characterized by the notion that the universe was created by a monotheistic supernatural being, who is often seen as a harsh and punitive father, or masculine principle, residing in Heaven. The universe is conceived as basically finite and rational (because governed by the Creator's Providence). The Oriental religions conceive the universe as "given," occupied by polytheistic and animistic gods. Instead of the father in Heaven, the Earth as the mother is important. The universe is seen as basically infinite (e.g., the notion of Karma) and irrational. The Semitic universe is characterized by intolerance and lack of compromise, while the Oriental world is characterized by tolerance and adaptability. Professor Ishida explained the former as the world-view of militant nomadic people who challenged the dry steppe that extended from the Eurasian continent to

Northern Africa, and the latter as the world-view of farming people who lived on the humid and fertile land which extended from India to East Asia. It should be interesting to translate these characteristics of the two world-views described by Ishida into more empirically testable concepts and see how such a grandly macroscopic view of world cultures helps us to understand contemporary cultures and societies in the East and West. We are accustomed to understanding human behavior in terms of particular child rearing practices, role expectations, value systems and social structure, and need some clarification of concepts in order to utilize the findings of culture history in our understanding of contemporary human behavior.

In this connection, a book written by a Japanese scholar of French history is of interest to us. In a book with an eye-catching title, *Meat-eaters' Thought*, Professor Sabata (1966) boldly tried to explain many aspects of Western values and social structure as deriving from the fact that Europeans eat meat and bread. Sabata establishes that the Europeans are carnivorous and the Orientals are herbivorous by pointing out that in Pakistan, India, Ceylon, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Japan, more than 60% of total calorie intake depends on starch or cereal, and less than 10% on protein. Conversely, in many European countries, the United States, and Canada, less than 30% of total calorie intake depends upon starch or cereal, and more than 40% to 50% depends upon protein. According to Sabata, people who ate the animals they owned had to rationalize killing animals they loved, and developed the idea that animals are made by god to serve and be killed by men. In order to maintain such an idea, it was necessary to draw a clear line of demarcation between humans and animals. The Christian dogma emphasizing the discontinuity between humans and the rest of the animal species, its resistance to the Darwinian theory of evolution, the condemnation of sex as a sin (the sexual act makes animal and human look alike), the strong taboo on bestiality and emphasis on spiritual love in marital life, all reflect the basic attempt to separate the human from the rest of the animals. The author further contends that humanism, the thought that human beings are the center of the world, also stemmed from the same background. The strong tendency to demarcate humans and animals, which Sabata calls "*danzetsu ronri*" or logic of discontinuity, is also observed in the intolerant differentiation between Christians as perfect humans and pagans as inferior species. It is also reflected in a clear-cut class system, in which a small class rules a large population. For instance, in 1870 in Japan, the ruling class of samurai comprised 5% to 6% of the total population, whereas in 1789 in France, the ruling aristocrats and monks were only 0.5% to 0.6% of the total population. From the fact that the Europeans depended on bread, according to Sabata, families developed a strong social consciousness and the power of civilian community over the individual. In the author's view, democracy developed as the means of reconciling a

rigid class system and supremacy of society over individuals with the strong assertion and rebellion of individuals against society. The book implies that in the history of Oriental vegetarians these trends, derivatives of meat and bread eating, are characteristically lacking. In another book, Sabata (1964) contrasts various trends of West and East, for instance, "open society" of the West vs. "closed society" of the East; social consciousness vs. family consciousness; mercantilism vs. physiocracy; active pioneer spirit vs. passive dependence on tradition; clear-cut logic vs. ambiguous eclecticism; intolerance vs. tolerance; and masculine principle vs. feminine principle. The author's logic may be far-fetched in several places but the book still deserves our attention.

2. *Social Class Position and Social Mobility*

Little work has been done on psychological characteristics pertaining to a particular class position or social mobility in Japan. Tanaka and Matsuyama (1960) collected data from children of different occupational groups and found that children of wealthier families tend to look at life as the place for hard work, achievement, and enjoyment, while children of lower economic strata tend to look at life in terms of money and practicality. Their data, however, are not very clear-cut and more studies of this kind are needed.

Mannari's careful examination of the socioeconomic and educational background of business leaders of Meiji, Taisho, and Showa eras (1965) is valuable, but unfortunately his work does not include a personality study of executives such as those done for American executives by Henry (1949) or Warner and Abegglen (1955).

What also seems to need more inquiry is the presence of two apparently different motivational patterns in occupational achievement. Emphasis by many researchers of Japanese occupational achievement on such traits as "importance of collaterality," "dependency upon, and loyalty to, collectivity," or "*nenkō joretsu sei*," has often presented the Japanese as people who want to belong to a large collectivity to which they feel loyal and in which they feel secure. They certainly work very hard but, without "sticking their neck out," they quietly sit on the occupational conveyer belt and await their turn for raise and promotion. Such a picture is one-sided, because it leaves out the people who do not belong to a large organization but own and operate a small-scale industry and business, employing only a few workers or none at all other than their own family members. They are the people DeVos and I call "lower class capitalists" (DeVos 1965; DeVos and Wagatsuma MS). They are the "small-scale entrepreneurs" whom Lockwood (1954) gave an important role in the development of modern Japanese economy. Among these people, the occupational mobility pattern is not to "sit tight on a conveyer belt in a large collectivity," but,

after acquiring needed skill and knowledge by working for a large organization, to become independent by setting up their own small shops. A similar pattern is observable in other spheres of occupation, not necessarily in the lower class. One may work for years as an employee of a large publishing company, and acquire the knowledge and skills needed in the publishing business. One may also make acquaintances among writers and scholars who will serve as future suppliers of manuscripts when one quits the company and establishes one's own publishing company, using one's retirement fund as capital investment. Often one person is the president-editor-proof-reader-messengerboy. If he publishes two books every three months, his net income will be more or less the same as the salary he would be receiving from the large publishing company. These people do not want to belong to an organization but want to be the boss of their own castle, no matter how small the castle might be. They follow the ancient Chinese proverb, "*Keiko to narumo gyubi to narunakare* (It is better to be the head of a cock than the tail of a cow)." In Japan's success in the competitive world market of export, much depends on the activities of independent-minded, aggressive salesmen, who often operate all alone in cities of every part of the world. Collectivity orientation vs. independent entrepreneur spirit—how do these two seemingly different types of achievement motivation come about? Do the younger sons tend to be motivated to become the head of a cock, while the eldest sons tend to identify with the large collectivity to which they belong? My recent analysis of "phallic tendency" of the Japanese male might be of some relevance (Wagatsuma MSb) for understanding Japanese dependency and activeness.

3. *Untranslatable Words*

We are all familiar with Takeo Doi's excellent analysis of the word "amae" as the key concept for understanding Japanese personality structure (Doi 1962). DeVos and I (DeVos and Wagatsuma 1969) recently analyzed another word, "*sunao*," which is closely related to the psychology of *amae*. There are many other words related to these unique aspects of Japanese psychology, and they await our analysis.

Doi, in another article (1956), made an interesting exploration of the word "*ki*," the root that appears in a large number of Japanese adjectives and verbs regarding human feelings, character, or behavior. Doi feels that a peculiar emotional autonomy as well as isolation is indicated, inasmuch as "*ki*" is always treated as the subject. It may imply, Doi thinks, that the Japanese are resigned to the fact that they always yield to their emotions and find themselves quite at their mercy. I would like to indicate two more series of expressions, one with the common word "*hara*" (abdomen) and the other with the common word "*mushi*" (worm), both of which may also be characterized as "impersonal ways of expressing emotions and feelings."

"*Hara ga tatsu*" (I am angry), "*katahara itai*" (I feel like laughing at), "*hara ga kimaru*" (I have settled in my resolution). When one is depressed, one may be described as "possessed by *fusagi no mushi*, or worm of depression." When a person is still angry, the worm in his abdomen is not calmed down. When a man suddenly desires an extramarital affair, his behavior may be explained as the result of his being possessed by the worm of fickleness. When one has a premonition, it is called "*mushi no shirase*," or worm's message. If one does not like a person, it is because one's worm does not like the person. If a child continues a violent temper tantrum, the mother may take the child to a certain shrine to have the worm in the child "sealed" so that the worm will not cause more temper tantrums. A selfish man who expects much out of others, without ever reciprocating, is a man with too good a worm ("*mushi ga yoi*"). In the case of "*mushi*" it might be that the Japanese, to avoid holding an individual responsible for his impulsive behavior, attribute such behavior to an external agent, a worm. If a person acts out his impulses on his own accord, he cannot be excused as a disruptive member of a community, whereas if it is not he but something else that is responsible, he still has a chance for acceptance. It is interesting to note that when an individual's impulsive behavior becomes too abnormal and aberrant to be explained away as the worm's doing, such behavior is often explained as the consequence of possession of a more serious kind, such as by a fox or dog, that has to be driven out by magic and rituals ("*kitsune tsuki*").

One can never be careful enough in analyzing and speculating about words but there is much for us to do in the psychological study of the Japanese language. The careful analysis of many untranslatable words should tell us much about Japanese psychology.

There are hundreds of onomatopoeic adjectives and adverbs that characterize the Japanese language as basically "sensual." For example, flowers may fall *hara hara*, *chira chira*, or *hira hira*. It may rain *shito shito*, *sara sara*, *jabu jabu*, or *zā zā*. Pain may be felt *chiku chiku*, *hiri hiri*, *shiku shiku*, or *zuki zuki*. To our best knowledge, no one has systematically studied these interesting words.

4. *Japanese Women and Their Role Behavior.*

Lafcadio Hearn may be responsible for advertising among the Western men the idealized image of a Japanese woman who is graceful, delicate and quiet, and ready for self-sacrifice in her dedicated subservience; this image seems based on the confusion of her role behavior with her personality. Such a misconception has attracted American soldiers with certain personalities who, due to lack of confidence in their masculine ego, found it difficult to cope with self-assertive and often challenging American women. George DeVos, in his unpublished and unpublicized research with his

students (DeVos 1959), discovered that the Japanese wives of the soldiers his research team interviewed were far from being graceful, quiet, and subservient, but rather were masculine and even aggressive. They had rejected the idea of serving as a wife to a despotic Japanese husband, and had been attracted by the stereotype of a strong, masculine, and yet very chivalrous American male. The outcome of the discrepancy in expectations in such marriages was often unfortunate; the American man, having looked for an Oriental doll, found himself married to a tough cookie whose sheer presence became an added threat to his already shaky masculine ego; and the Japanese woman, having looked for a Western knight, found herself tied to a weakling whose dependent need often bothered her.

As we reported elsewhere (DeVos and Wagatsuma 1969, MS; Wagatsuma MSa), we discovered among husbands of the lower class in Arakawa Ward the prevalence of a basic sense of inadequacy, feeling of inferiority, shaky masculine identity, and passivity, whereas most of their wives were socially active, outgoing, self-assured, self-assertive, strong willed, and/or even aggressive. Generally, many lower-class families in Japan may very well be characterized as "*kakā denka*" or "petticoat government"; questioning whether they can also be called "matri-focal" will lead us to a reexamination of this concept. Comparative studies of lower-class families in different cultures in terms of intra-family role interaction patterns should be of great theoretical significance.

5. *National Character and Cultural Identity*

It is important to discover if the Japanese are changing and, if they are, in what ways. Now is the time for such studies, because the young adult members of Japanese society are those who were born in the postwar "baby boom" and grew up, it seems, with no knowledge of Confucian ethics, of Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, and no trauma of air raid, defeat, and starvation. They grew up in relative affluence, in which even for their parents the image of "old Japan" with all its implications began to seem vague and psychologically remote. If postwar change in Japanese culture and society exists, it must be evident in this new generation; in many ways these younger people are different from those who have been so far described as "Japanese" — for instance, we no longer seem to find that old role dedication and sense of responsibility.

To see if the Japanese are changing, on what level and in what sphere of their personality, it is helpful to follow and compare carefully the results of the extensive opinion and attitude survey repeated every five years by the Research Committee of Japanese National Character at the Institute of Statistical Mathematics (Tōkei Sūri Kenkyū Jo, Kokuminsei Chōsa Inkai 1961; Hayashi, Nishihira, and Suzuki 1965; Hayashi and Suzuki 1967; Nishihira 1963). Equally significant will be the study of Zen Gaku

Ren leaders and followers as well as Sōka Gakkai Youth Group members and volunteer members of the Japan Defense Corps.

For the study of youth in any country, the problem of identity is a crucial subject. Japanese youth is no exception, or, as Lifton pointed out (1962, 1963), the problem might be amplified in Japan because it is inseparable from the problem of national and cultural identity of the Japanese nation as a whole, which I called in the beginning of this paper the alchemic crucible of East and West.

At first overwhelmed by the Western world's great power, Japan caught up with the West in an amazingly short time. Then feeling a sense of rejection over unequal treatment, she appointed herself the champion of non-white Asians, and in this role she boldly tried to win a place in the company of white imperialists. Failing disastrously, Japan found herself receiving a "democratic education" from her American teachers toward whom she felt the greatest rivalry, a rivalry mixed with admiration. I pointed out elsewhere (Wagatsuma 1967; Wagatsuma and Yoneyama 1967) that the diffuse ambivalence of the Japanese toward Western civilization is often reflected in their ambivalence toward physical features of white people. Among ordinary women, one often sees hair dyed a purplish or reddish hue; plastic surgery, especially to alter eye folds and to build up the bridge of the nose, has become almost standardized practice among the younger movie actresses and actors. Many more women use a small tool to fold single eyelids into a double crease. Many women also try numerous devices to change the apparent or actual size of their breasts. All these apparent or actual physical alterations that the Japanese, particularly women, impose on themselves have Caucasian physical features as their model. Few mannequins in show cases, with their hair any color but black, look Japanese. In women's magazines, Caucasian fashion models often appear first, followed by mixed-blood girls; those with clearly mongoloid features appear only on the last pages.

When Japan was trying hard to catch up with the West, Fukuzawa Yukiichi, in 1885, stressed the necessity of the Japanese nation getting out of Asia ("*Datsu A*"). Two years later, Inoue Kaoru, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, proposed to the Prime Minister "to transform our Empire and our people into what will be like a country in Europe and people in Europe." All the efforts spent on physical alteration by Japanese women seem to be geared toward such aims.

Parallel to what I call "Caucasianization" (*haku-jin-ka*) of sexual esthetics among recent Japanese is the tremendous number of English and other European words flooding TV commercials, newspaper advertisements, and daily conversation, mostly mispronounced and therefore unnoticed by inexperienced outsiders. Such eagerness to accept, or perhaps a weak resistance to, things Western is related to what I pointed out as the

lack of the variable Japan in the work of Japanese social psychologists. And yet, as reflected in many Japanese feelings that Caucasians and Japanese are basically different creatures (Wagatsuma 1967), Japanese seem to remain Japanese. Professors Ishida and Sabata's previously mentioned listing of essentially Western traits and basically Eastern traits might be seen as the reflection of a Japanese tendency, or perhaps *effort*, to remain Japanese, in spite of plastic surgery. We do not as yet know well the inside structure of this seemingly complicated East-West complex in the Japanese mind. Perhaps Japan's nationalism should be reexamined in terms of Japan's group identity problem.

For instance, it would be meaningful to analyze carefully what Japan, vis-à-vis Western nations, meant psychologically to various leaders in different eras of Japan (e.g., Bellah 1965). One way of doing this would be to study the meaning of overseas experiences to Japanese intellectuals who lived during Meiji, Taisho, and pre- and postwar Showa. After the war, many Japanese wrote about their experiences in the West, particularly in the United States (to name only a few, Eto 1964; Horiba 1968; Kato 1966; and Yamazaki 1965). Many more should be collected and their content should be examined.

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